

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 BOGOTA 008454

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/07/2015

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [EAI](#) [PTER](#) [ECON](#) [ETRD](#) [EAGR](#) [KCRM](#) [KJUS](#) [CO](#) [EI](#)

SUBJECT: FOREIGN MINISTER BARCO AND AMBASSADOR DISCUSS
KATRINA, IRISH THREE, FREE TRADE, AND CHAVEZ

REF: A. BOGOTA 8415

[B](#). BOGOTA 8414

[C](#). BOGOTA 8392

[D](#). BOGOTA 8410

[E](#). STATE 164051

Classified By: Ambassador William B. Wood.

Reason: 1.4 (b,d)

SUMMARY

[1](#). (C) Ambassador Wood thanked Foreign Minister Carolina Barco September 7 for the GOC's offers of assistance in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. Barco said the GOC could send its 30 disaster relief experts and nutritional powder immediately and is standing by for further instructions from the U.S. Wood told Barco that the U.S. would communicate to Dublin the importance of Ireland following its international obligations with regard to the "Irish 3" who fled Colombia and who face a 17 year sentence for terrorism; Barco said the GOC was open to the three serving a custodial sentence in Ireland. In response to Wood's suggestions, Barco said the GOC would make available to Dublin the transcripts associated with their convictions (they are being translated) and consider hiring an Irish attorney or advisor and sending a representative to Dublin to make the GOC case to the Irish government and media. With regard to President Alvaro Uribe's upcoming trip to the U.S., Barco said the Ambassador's suggestion of a meeting with the Washington Post editorial board was a good one; such a recent meeting by Vice President Francisco Santos had resulted in positive Post coverage of Colombia's Justice and Peace law. Barco informed Wood that she had already accepted the Secretary's September 16 dinner offer. She said Uribe had instructed GOC FTA negotiators to place "all the GOC's cards on the table" during upcoming Washington talks, with the objective of concluding a deal by the end of October. Barco said she expected to receive a GOC draft of Plan Colombia II late September 7. She expressed GOC concern for political developments in Nicaragua, and for Venezuelan president Hugo Chavez's efforts to use oil to cement his influence in the region. Barco suggested the U.S., Colombia, Mexico, and other countries consider a "line of credit" facility for Central America to ensure that Chavez's finances were not the only option for Central American countries. Barco agreed with Wood that the UN High-Level Meeting on development should be constructive. She said recent problems with the U.S. associated with the GOC's position on UNHCR reform were the result of a misunderstanding and said they had already been resolved. Barco informed Wood of the GOC's recent efforts to solicit international political and financial support for paramilitary demobilization. End summary.

GOC Assistance for Hurricane Katrina Recovery

[2](#). (C) Ambassador Wood thanked Foreign Minister Barco for the GOC's offers of assistance in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. He said that he had talked in the past several days with President Alvaro Uribe, Justice and Interior Minister Sabas Pretelt, and Vice Minister of Defense Andres Penate, all of whom had expressed solidarity with the U.S. and offered specific assistance. (As reported ref C, Penate increased the GOC's offer of assistance September 6 to 30 disaster relief experts and 10 tons of nutritional supplement.) Wood said the U.S. would inform the GOC as soon as practicable about how and where the GOC should deliver the aid. The U.S. wanted to ensure that experts and relief supplies arrived in an orderly manner to a place that could take advantage of them. Barco said the GOC was looking into other ways to help. The Ambassador informed Barco that the Embassy was working with the Associated Press on a story highlighting the GOC's assistance. (The story was published on September 7.)

Irish Three

[3](#). (C) Wood informed Barco that the U.S. would communicate to the Irish Republic the importance of complying with its international obligations with regard to the "Irish 3" who

recently surfaced in Dublin after fleeing Colombia and who face a 17 year sentence for terrorism (ref E). The Irish Republic should not be used as a safe haven for terrorists. Wood said that the solution was up to Colombia and Ireland. The "Irish 3" could be extradited to Colombia or serve their sentences in Ireland. Wood said the U.S. would press the Irish Republic to give the GOC full cooperation on the matter. He asked Barco to provide the Irish Republic with all the evidence associated with their trial, appeal, conviction, and sentence, and suggested that the GOC consider retaining an Irish attorney or advisor to assist in understanding the nuances of Irish legal and political processes. Wood also suggested that the GOC consider sending a representative to Ireland to explain its case to the government and to the press, especially on Colombia's justice system and human rights record.

14. (C) Barco thanked the Ambassador for the information and said she thought the political climate was changing in favor of the "Irish 3" serving a custodial sentence. She said initially the subject was regarded as being especially sensitive because of the Northern Irish peace process, but recently she detected movement. The GOC was translating the trial documents for Dublin. The GOC was open to the possibility of the "Irish 3" serving their sentences in Ireland. Unfortunately, the respective schedules of President Uribe and Irish Prime Minister Bertie Ahern appeared to rule out an UNGA meeting, but either Barco or Vice President Santos would meet with Irish Foreign Minister Dermot Ahern in the U.S. It was possible, she said, that Ambassador to the UK Alfonso Lopez could visit the Irish Republic to make the GOC's case.

Uribe and Barco's Schedules in the U.S.

15. (C) Wood said President Uribe's schedule in the U.S. looked very positive (copy faxed to WHA/AND - French.) He suggested, however, that the GOC consider a meeting with the Washington Post editorial board. Barco said this was a good idea; VP Santos had met with them in recent months and the Post's relatively favorable editorial was the result. Barco said the Uribe would meet with Algerian President Bouteflika to explore Algeria's experience in peace-building and to solicit his support for Colombia's campaign for Cartagena to serve as the headquarters of the World Tourism Organization. Barco said Cartagena was competing against cities such as Prague, which already have many other prestigious responsibilities. For Colombia, Cartagena's selection would increase tourism and help change perceptions about the country. Uribe would also meet with South Africa's President Thabo Mbeki; she said she understood there would be a second "restorative justice" meeting in South Africa to follow up on the initial event in Cali.

16. (C) Barco told Wood she had accepted Secretary Rice's September 16 dinner invitation. Wood said he understood the dinner would be informal, without notetakers, and would be an opportunity to exchange ideas, a conversation rather than a meeting.

Free Trade Talks

17. (C) Barco said that, following his September 5 meeting with Peruvian president Alejandro Toledo, Uribe instructed the GOC FTA delegation to "put all its cards on the table" in their upcoming talks in Washington, D.C. She said the GOC would meet U.S. representatives "in total sincerity" with the goal of concluding a deal by the end of October. The GOC would present its bottom lines in Washington. According to Barco, Uribe's rationale was that high-level interest would drop off as 2006 elections approached in all four negotiating partners and the Doha round resumed (refs A and B).

Plan Colombia II

18. (C) Barco said she expected to receive the latest draft of Plan Colombia II late on September 7, for review prior to her departure for Washington with Uribe September 14.

Concern about Nicaragua, Chavez Role in Central America

19. (C) Barco said the GOC expects Nicaragua's President Bolanos to visit Colombia on Tuesday, September 13, prior to Uribe's September 14 departure for the U.S. The GOC is concerned about political developments in Nicaragua. Bolanos has maintained a low profile and the Nicaraguan Congress has made some arbitrary decisions in recent months. Barco said Sandinista leader Daniel Ortega "has a good chance" in

upcoming elections if trends continue. In the GOC's view, the OAS should make a statement defending democracy in Nicaragua. Barco said OAS Secretary General Jose Miguel Insulza told Uribe last week that he needed a report before making a decision, but she expects Insulza to call a meeting of the OAS Permanent Council to discuss the matter. Such hemispheric action was critical, Barco said. In her August meetings with the presidents of El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala, all said they were worried about political developments in Nicaragua.

10. (C) In Barco's view, Central America has made great strides since the 1980s and risks being undermined by Venezuelan president Hugo Chavez. This is a critical moment for Central America. Barco said Central American countries are struggling to pay increasingly high oil bills ("they are drowning"); Chavez senses an opportunity and is dangling the possibility of providing financial assistance to cope with the "energy crisis" (as he is doing with educational expenses that are more properly the responsibility of the Inter-American Bank for Development, she said, and as he is apparently doing with Ecuador). Barco asked if the U.S. would be willing to consult with Colombia, Mexico, and other like-minded countries to construct something like "lines of credit" for Central American countries. In her view, such a facility would ensure that Chavez's money would not be the only assistance available for Central American countries. GOC Ambassador Luis Alberto Moreno (newly elected president of the IDB who will assume that role on October 1, 2005) would raise this issue with the State Department. Wood said the U.S. was aware of Chavez's polarizing policies and desire to lead a "bloc" of countries in opposition to the U.S. The U.S. was facing a number of calls on its funds from Iraq, Afghanistan, Colombia, Africa, and now Hurricane Katrina and its room for maneuver was less than usual. He suggested that Barco could raise this topic at the September 16 dinner with the Secretary because it had hemispheric, and perhaps broader international repercussions.

United Nations

11. (C) The Ambassador said the U.S. wants constructive outcomes on development issues from the UN High-Level Meeting. He noted that we were often unpleasantly surprised by Colombian positions at the UN. Barco responded to Wood's concern about the GOC's role in recent discussions at the UN on reform by saying there had been a misunderstanding that had now been cleared up. Barco said the GOC had no intent to cause problems for the U.S.

International Financing for Paramilitary Demobilization

12. (C) In response to the Ambassador's question, Barco said Uribe had raised international support for the paramilitary demobilization process in recent meetings with Peruvian president Toledo and Chilean president Ricardo Lagos. Barco said she had also talked to EU Foreign Affairs High Commissioner Javier Solano and was pleased to hear of the constructive COLAT discussion September 6, at which France had been "not so aggressive." Barco said the OAS mission needs additional support.
WOOD